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Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
----------130568 101542Z /40
R 101410Z JUL 77
FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2288
INFO AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L AMMAN 3827

EXDIS

FOR NEA VELIOTES AND AID-NOOTER AND WHEELER

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, US, JO, IS
SUBJECT: JORDAN-POTASH PROJECT

REF: STATE 137357

1. WE HAVE GIVEN CONSIDERABLE THOUGHT TO SUGGESTION REFTEL AND AMBASSADOR DISCUSSED THE ISSUE WITH CROWN PRINCE HASSAN ON JULY 9 FOLLOWING LATTER'S RETURN TO AMMAN FROM EXTENDED VISIT TO U.S. AND EUROPE.

2. WE HAVE BEEN AWARE FOR SOME TIME THAT JORDANIANS DESIRED TO SEEK SOME SORT OF HELP FROM THE ISRAELIS ON POTASH. PREVIOUSLY, AS REFTEL MAKES CLEAR, FOCUS HAS BEEN ON DIKE CONSTRUCTION, LOCATION, AND TECHNIQUES.

3. WE ALSO UNDERSTAND THAT PUBLISHED ISRAELI INFORMATION ON TECHNOLOGICAL PROCESSES EMPLOYED IN THEIR DEAD SEA POTASH WORKS WERE NOT FULLY ADEQUATE FOR THE DESIGN, CONSTRUCTION, AND OPERATION OF A POTASH FACILITY IN JORDAN, IN THE SENSE THAT WHILE THE CONFIDENTIAL

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THEORIES ARE WELL-KNOWN, THE ACTUAL BUGS IN ANY PROCESS AS COMPLICATED AS THIS ONE COULD WELL LEAD TO VERY CONSIDERABLE EXTRA TIME AND EXPENSE.

4. HASSAN MADE CLEAR IN MY CONVERSATION WITH HIM THAT HIS INTEREST IN TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE IN THE POTASH PROJECT WOULD COVER ALL PHASES OF THE

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OPERATION AND ALL PARTS OF THE PROCESS. THUS, HE
PUT STRESS ON DIKE CONSTRUCTION, DISPOSAL OF
FRESH WATER, OPERATION OF CARNELLITE PANS,
CONSTRUCTION, DESIGN AND OPERATION OF THE PROCESSING
FACILITY AND ANY OTHER AREA IN WHICH ONE SIDE
COULD BE HELPFUL TO THE OTHER.

5. SECONDLY, HASSAN MADE CLEAR THAT JORDANIANS
ARE WILLING TO TRY TO ARRANGE FOR ACQUISITION OF
TECHNOLOGY AND INFORMATION ON A COMMERCIAL
BASIS.

6. THIRD, HASSAN, WHO IS FAMILIAR WITH OUR
ROLE IN THE YARMOUK WATER RIGHTS ISSUE, WOULD
LIKE TO SEE THE U.S. PLAYING THE SAME SORT OF
INFORMAL GOOD OFFICES ROLE REGARDING THE POTASH
FACILITY. IF THE U.S. SO WISHED, I AM SURE THAT,
AFTER DISCUSSION WITH THE KING AND THE PRIME
MINISTER, I COULD OBTAIN AN OFFICIAL REQUEST FOR
US TO PERFORM SUCH A ROLE.

7. REGARDING YOUR SUGGESTION PARA 4
REFTEL, WE HAVE THE IMPRESSION THAT WASHINGTON HAS
A TENDENCY TO BE A LITTLE UNCLEAR ON THE FACT
THAT THIS PROCESS WOULD DEFINITELY
NOT INVOLVE ISRAELI-JORDANIAN DIRECT CONTACTS.
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WE WOULD NECESSARILY HAVE TO PLAY THE INTERVENING
AND BRIDGING ROLE. SINCE THIS IS A HIGHLY TECHNICAL
AND EXTREMELY COMPLEX QUESTION, WE WOULD HOPE THAT
WASHINGTON COULD THINK MORE ABOUT THE WAYS WHICH
SUCH CONTACT COULD BE PURSUED ON THE U.S.
SIDE. WOULD THE U.S. CONTRACTOR HAVE TO BE
IN DIRECT TOUCH WITH THE ISRAELIS? THIS OF COURSE
WOULD HAVE TO BE ARRANGED FOR BY DISCUSSIONS
BETWEEN EMBASSY TEL AVIV AND THE APPROPRIATE
ISRAELI AUTHORITIES. HOW COULD WE AVOID POISONING
THE POTASH PROJECT FOR OTHER ARAB INVESTORS
WHEN IT BECOMES APPARENT THAT ISRAELI TECHNOLOGY
AND KNOW-HOW IS BEING CRANKED DIRECTLY INTO THE
PROJECT? HOW TOO CAN WE ARRANGE FOR A DISCUSSION
OF WHAT WOULD BE APPROPRIATE COMMERCIAL TERMS ON
THE QUESTION OF ISRAELI DESIRES FOR REIMBURSEMENT
AND HOW WOULD THAT FIT IN WITH WHAT SEEMS
TO US TO BE OBVIOUS ARAB DESIRES TO AVOID INVESTING
FUNDS WHICH WILL FIND THEIR WAY QUICKLY INTO THE
HANDS OF THE ISRAELIS?

8. WE ALSO HAVE TO EXAMINE CAREFULLY THE QUESTION OF SECRECY,

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THE DEGREE DESIRED BY BOTH SIDES, AS WELL AS ANY
ADVANTAGES TO BE ACCRUED BY EITHER SIDE--SUCH AS
ISRAELI DESIRES TO BE IN DIRECT OR INDIRECT
CONTACT WITH THEIR ARAB NEIGHBORS ON ISSUES OF
THIS SORT.

9. WE TOO WOULD BE INTERESTED IN EMBASSY
TEL AVIV'S ASSESSMENT OF THE PROBLEM. FOR THE
JORDANIANS THE ADVENT OF THE BEGIN GOVERNMENT
AND WHAT THEY PERCEIVED TO BE ITS HOSTILITY,
OR AT BEST ITS INDIFFERENCE, TO JORDANIANS,
MIGHT LEAD THEM ALSO TO WISH US TO CONTINUE TO
PURSUE THE PRESENT PROPOSAL AS A KIND OF TEST
CASE FOR THE FUTURE.
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10. IN SUM, WE BELIEVE THAT THE IDEA HAS MERIT AND
WE ARE IN FAVOR OF CARRYING OUT SUCH A ROLE IN THE
PATTERN PREVIOUSLY ESTABLISHED FOR MAQARIN.
WE BELIEVE TOO THAT AN EXCHANGE OF IDEAS WITH TEL AVIV MAY
HELP US FURTHER TO SEE WHAT CAN BE DONE. FINALLY,
WE WOULD SUGGEST THAT ANY PROPOSALS ALONG THE ABOVE
LINES SHOULD BE CAREFULLY REVIEWED IN LIGHT OF THE
COMING VISIT OF THE ISRAELI PRIME MINISTER TO
WASHINGTON, ITS OUTCOME, AND THE CONTINUING U.S.
ROLE IN THE PEACE PROCESS TO INSURE THAT THIS SET
OF ACTIVITIES IS CAREFULLY ATTUNED TO THE OTHER
AND THAT WE DO NOT END UP WORKING AT CROSS PURPOSES
WITH OURSELVES.
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